Christian Community

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RACE RELATIONS

All over the world men and women, children and youth are hearing and reading about the struggle which is going on in this country between the principles of brotherhood, justice, and community on the one hand, and the discriminations based on selfishness, fear, prejudice, or mere custom on the other. The friends of democracy grieve, as its enemies rejoice, at each set-back to the cause of equal justice under law. The advances toward freedom may not be so widely publicized. And though the press has on the whole reported the news fairly, there are areas in which it has been diffcult to get a perspective as to the facts.

We as Christians have a peculiar interest and a peculiar responsibility in this struggle. We confess our faith in the God who made all men "of one," in whose Son Jesus Christ can be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, whose will is love, and whose Church is the fellowship of the faithful without distinction. The eyes of faith discern the present as one of those eras on whose outcome may well depend the future of our civilization.

While an important crisis is facing the people of the South, the principle at stake is not sectional but national. Northern cities and rural communities that sometimes boast they have no race problem also have far to go. The violence and lawlessness that lurk below the surface wherever a powerful group's interest or convenience appears to be threatened means that all of us must watch and work and pray.

In order to make available some of the significant facts on both sides of the ledger, we have arranged to reprint in this issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY a part of the Report made by Dr. J. Oscar Lee, Executive Director of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations to the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., on December 1. The Commission on Christian Social Action believes that our pastors and lay leaders

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The Current Situation in the South

By J. Oscar Lee

As of October, 1955 the *Southern School News* reported that "a preliminary tabulation of attendance figures showed that 134,000 Negro children are now attending mixed schools in eight former segregation states and the District of Columbia." This movement, it is reported, involves at least 362 school districts or local systems. In the same report it was stated that "there were no mixed classrooms at the public school level in Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia."

A more detailed report indicates movement and an interesting trend. As of September, 1955, four school districts had been integrated in Arkansas. Despite rising opposition to desegregation in south Delaware the school year of 1955 started with 21 out of 104 public school districts considering themselves desegregated. Limited integration is reported in 10 counties and 4 of the larger cities in Kentucky. Maryland reported at the beginning of the current school year that integration was in effect in 8 counties and Baltimore. This indicates the need for further work in 15 counties.

While there is no reported movement toward compliance with the Supreme Court decision in the public schools of Tennessee, the federally supported school system of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, has integrated Negro pupils at the junior and senior high school levels. More than sixty school districts in western and southern Texas started the school year with some degree of integration. However the organization of white citizens' councils which has gotten under way in the past few months in Texas is reported to be stiffening the attitude against desegregation in many local communities. Authorities in West Virginia report that all but 10 of the state's 55 counties "began to remove racial distinctions in schools."

[Data from *Southern School News*]

On the legal front as of October, 1955, there were 27 cases pending which involved some aspect of segregation in education. Most of them were Federal district court cases and most of them were aimed at gaining admission for Negro students to all-white schools.

[From *Southern School News*]

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In the Presence of Group Tensions and Organized Hate

WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS DO?

Check rumors. Get the facts, and see that ways are kept open for others to get them.

Encourage public officials who seek to promote understanding and prevent violence. Where officials are indifferent or hostile, work to bring about justice, appealing if necessary to higher agencies of government.

Foster associations across group lines, so that understanding may develop and common objectives may be more readily achieved.

Work for measures which will reduce discrimination, make possible orderly advance, and increase the area in which fair play and fellowship may operate.

Support those individuals and groups who are engaged in peaceful and responsible protest or opposition to injustices.

Make certain that the church determines its own policies and practices on the basis of its true character as the Body of Christ, not on the basis of the prejudices of a class, group, or section.

Pray without ceasing for the victims of injustice, for those whose blindness or prejudice leads them to cause others to suffer, and for the triumph of the spirit of reconciliation and brotherhood, both in ourselves and in the society of which we are part.

The Current Situation in the South

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There are varying attitudes and policies which are expressed by state officials regarding the Supreme Court's decision. They run from compliance with varying degrees of speed through "marking time," the discovery of legal or technical means to comply with the decision and at the same time to maintain racially segregated schools, to open defiance of the decision.

Policies on Schools

Virginia furnishes a good example of a state which aims at technical compliance with the Supreme Court's decision but which at the same time is endeavoring to maintain segregated public schools. Recently the Virginia Commission on Public Education (called the Gray Commission) reported to Governor Thomas B. Stanley. Let me quote from the published text of the Commission's Report:

"This Commission believes that separate facilities in our public schools are in the best interest of both races, educationally and otherwise, and that compulsory integration should be resisted by all proper means in our power."

The Commission recommended the enactment of legislation on twelve specific points to buttress and supplement its general recommendations. In connection with the recommendation on one of these points the report states:

"Local school boards should be authorized but not required to maintain public schools for a period of at least nine months. A locality may be confronted with an emergency situation."

The Commission made three general recommendations, two of which are as follows:

"To meet the problem thus created by the Supreme Court, the Commission proposes a plan of assignment which will permit local school boards to assign their pupils in such a manner as will best serve the welfare of their communities and protect and foster the public schools under their jurisdiction. The Commission further proposes legislation to provide that no child be required to attend a school wherein both white and colored children are taught and that the parents of those children who object to integrated schools or who live in communities wherein no public schools are operated, be given tuition grants for educational purposes."

The third recommendation calls for a constitutional convention to amend the state constitution so as to permit the use of public funds to make tuition grants and other educational payments. The State Constitution now prohibits the use of public funds to pay for private schooling. This prohibition was upheld by the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in a decision rendered on November 7, 1955.

[*The Washington Post and Times Herald,* November 13, 1955]

Mississippi is probably an outstanding example of the attitude of defiance of the Supreme Court's decision. It has been the scene of many incidents which are violations of civil rights and civil liberties. The original organization of White Citizens Council in the state and the spread of this organization to other states in the deep South are a great concern.

The first meeting of a White Citizens Council is reported as having taken place in Indianola, Sunflower County, Mississippi on July 11, 1954. It is said that 14 men were present at the meeting. Today it is estimated that there are 300 councils in Mississippi with about 65,000 dues paying members and an uncounted number of "allied councils with identical constitutions in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida."

[*New York Daily News,* November 22, 1955]

The purpose of this organization is to maintain racial segregation at all costs. It is using the technique of economic sanctions against those, both Negro and white, who differ with the organization on the segregation issue. Also, it employs techniques of infiltration into local organizations and intimidation. The statements of its leaders indicate the use of social and political pressure to accomplish the ends of the organization.

Apply Economic Pressure

Economic sanctions have been directed against Negroes who are active in the movement for the integration of the public schools and who insist upon exercising the right to vote. They have been discharged from jobs. The banks have foreclosed on mortgages and withdrawn credit. Some distributors have refused to supply Negro merchants. Negroes have been threatened with the loss of jobs if they patronize businesses run by other Negroes who are active in the movement for integration or for voting. White persons are told not to patronize the businesses of such Negroes. Many of these cases have been reported in the press and the staff of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations has been told of others. However, let me quote from an article written by Murray Kempton of the New York *Post:*

"Last August 6, in Yazoo City, Mississippi, 53 Negroes petitioned the local Board of Education to admit their children to the white school. Ten days days later, the Yazoo *Herald* published a paid advertisment listing . . . the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of every one of the signers. At the bottom ran the credit line: 'Published as a public service by the Citizens Council of Yazoo City.'

"Last night, two of those signers . . . told what had happened to them and the other 51 persons on the petition.

". . . . . Jasper Mims, treasurer of the N.A.A.C.P., has been a carpenter for 30 years; before his name appeared in the Herald, he used to earn $150.00 in a good week.

[Mr. Mims said:]

'I haven't had a call for work since'. Hoover Harvey was a plumber with a largely white practice. It is all gone now, and he is down to $20.00 a week. Both of them took their names off the petition, but it did them no good.

"Their petition still lies in the Board of Education headquarters; only two signatures are left, and they belong to people who have left the county for good."

[The New York *Post,* November 11, 1955]

White people and even the churches are subject to this pressure. An example of this is the meeting called at Tchula, Holmes County, Mississippi to run Eugene Cox and Dr. David Minter of the New Providence Farm out of the county because they were "suspected integrationists." Although the White Citizens Council disclaims responsibility for calling the meeting, the chairman of the Tchula White Citizens Council, State Representative J. P. Love, is reported to have presided at the meeting. The Reverend Marsh M. Calloway, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at near-by Durant is reported to have stood up in the meeting and denounced it as "un-Christian and un-American." Later he was forced to resign his pastorate because he had denounced the meeting.

Most of the church groups in the South have passed statements supporting the Supreme Court's decision and they are standing by these statements. However, there are evidences that the White Citizens Councils are bringing pressure to bear on local churches and ministers. A few ministers seem to support the position taken by the Councils. Some laymen are members and even leaders of the movement. Other laymen holding positions of responsibility in the churches are under pressure from the Councils to stop ministers, church people, and the churches from taking positions against segregation. On the other hand it must be said there are ministers, church peo-

ple, newspaper editors and community leaders, even in Mississippi, who are valiantly resisting this movement. In addition, there must be a large group of people who do not speak against this movement because they fear that they will not be supported or even may suffer because of their statements.

At this point it may be well to call attention to some of the other ministers who have lost their pulpits because of the segregation in the schools issue. They are: the Reverend Roy C. Delamotte of Mississippi; the Reverend Ed. Jones of near Parkin, Arkansas; the Reverend C. Jackson Stafford of Batesburg, South Carolina; the Reverend Robert Trotman of Terrell County, Georgia; the Reverend J. A. Delaine of Lake City, South Carolina. The Reverend Mr. J. A. Delaine, an African Methodist Episcopal Minister, had his church burned. He fled to New York City after having his home fired upon and is now facing extradition proceedings in New York on a South Carolina writ for having returned the shots of those who fired upon his home.

[Incidents documented in several newspapers.]

Racists Resort to Violence

Returning to the Mississippi situation, it can be said that the White Citizens Councils have contributed to creating a climate of opinion which has made a whole series of violent incidents possible.

Tchula, referred to earlier, is in Holmes County and the Sheriff of this county, Richard Byrd, is well-known for his brutality to Negroes. On July 3, 1954 the Sheriff ordered a group of Negroes in the vicinity of Tchula to move on even though they were not creating a disturbance. As they ran, the Sheriff pulled his gun and started to fire. One Negro was shot in the back. Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith, publisher of the Lexington *Advertiser* and the Durant *News,* reported the following about the Negro who was shot: "He turned out to be a boy named Henry Randle who had never been in any trouble and was in town to buy food." Sheriff Byrd sued publisher Smith for libel for printing the account of this brutality. The local jury awarded Byrd a $10,000.00 verdict. However, the Mississippi Supreme Court reversed the judgment and in substance declared that the printing of the facts is not libelous.

On May 7, 1955, the Reverend George W. Lee was murdered in Belzoni, Mississippi after he had been ordered to remove his name from the registration list and had refused to do so. No arrests have been made in connection with this murder. The newspapers of Sunday, November 27, 1955 reported the shooting of Gus Courts, a Negro merchant of Belzoni.

Lamar Smith was killed in front of the courthouse at Brookhaven, Mississippi in broad daylight on August 13, 1955. Mr. Smith had been active in the primary election of August 2 and in the run-off primary election of August 23.

The kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till on August 28, 1955 served to focus national attention on the violence that is occurring in the state of Mississippi. In the trial of the men accused of murdering Till, the all white jury rendered a verdict of "not guilty." It should be pointed out that only voters may served on juries. The 19,000 Negroes in Tallahatchie County, where the murder trial took place, are not permitted to vote. The same two men were brought before the grand jury in Leflore County for the kidnapping of Emmett Till. The atmosphere in Leflore County was such that the grand jury would not indict even though it is reported that the Sheriff testified in the murder trial that the two men, Milam and Bryant had admitted that they had taken the Till boy from his uncle's cabin.

The N.A.A.C.P. lawyers have consulted the Department of Justice regarding the Emmett Till case. However, there appear to be no clear grounds for Federal intervention.

The General Board resolution of October 9, 1955 regarding the situation in Mississippi mentions recommendations to be brought to the Board. In a statement adopted on May 19, 1954, this Board stated that "The decision [on segregation in public schools] is a milestone in the achievement of human rights, another evidence of the endeavor to respect the dignity and worth of all men." Also the Board pointed out that "To put the decision into effect will test the goodwill and discipline of people in many communities." The people of many communities are meeting the test of goodwill and discipline. However, the people of other communities appear to falter as they face the test.

Our Responsibility

When people act as though they have forgotten the democratic and religious heritage upon which the Nation is founded, the churches must exercise moral persuasion in the interest of obedience of the law and they must insist upon the use of democratic processes for achieving social change. They should work to assure continuance of the public schools in those areas which threaten to discontinue them. A universal common education is necessary for the continued growth of our democratic heritage and for the freedom to choose and to practice one's religion. The churches must speak out against the use of economic sanctions to accomplish thought control, as a threat to the freedom of thought, expression and action. It has been suggested in a number of quarters that an appeal be made to the United States Attorney General to put the White Citizens Councils on the subversive list as a conspiracy to deprive American citizens of civil liberties, civil rights, and the right to earn a livelihood. Although many questions may be raised about the wisdom of this proposal, its value at this point is to highlight the threat of the White Citizens Councils to our way of life. Also, the present situation points up the need for a way of achieving positive action when law enforcement breaks down in states and local communities or when they fail to enforce the law with equal protection for all citizens. This indicates the need for Federal legislation to outlaw mob violence and lynching and to obtain more adequate law enforcement with equal protection for all citizens. . . .

Possibly there is no better way to conclude this paper than to report that the reaction of the foreign press to the verdict in the Till murder case was one of universal and unqualified condemnation. Obviously the verdict furnished ammunition for the enemies of freedom to use against the Nation as it attempts to work against the oppression of peoples in other parts of the world.

Questions For Christians In 1956

What are the important questions about which American voters will have to make up their minds if they are to vote responsibly for Presidential and Congressional candidates during this critical year? To assist you in picking out the issues, so that you may look for the best answers and find out for yourself who the most trustworthy candidates are, a number of Protestant denominations have cooperated in producing *Questions for Christians in 1956*.

Order enough for your church, your Guild, your Brotherhood. Ten cents for a single copy; 5 cents each in quantities from 10 to 100; 100 and up, 4 cents; 1,000 or more, 3 cents. How many, please?

Race Relations

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in every section of the land should be familiar with these facts.

Since Dr. Lee made this report many other developments have taken place, for this is a day in which things move quickly. The Gray Plan to which Dr. Lee refers was approved by the voters of Virginia on January 9. On January 30, delegates from twelve southern states met in Memphis to form a national organization called the Federation for Constitutional Government, to coordinate the efforts of such groups as the Citizens Councils. The enrollment of Miss Autherine Lucy as an undergraduate student at the University of Alabama was the occasion of a riot and intemperate attacks upon the University administration which did not cease when the latter suspended her on the grounds of personal safety and subsequently expelled her for her criticism of the University. To its credit, the University has also expelled the white student reported to be the chief instigator of the riot.

Probably most significant of all, the Negroes of Montgomery, Alabama, have peacefully protested the indignities to which they had been subjected, by effectively boycotting the transit system of that city. This spontaneous protest movement early secured the wise guidance of a number of able Negro ministers of the community. Though subjected to violence and many kinds of annoyance including indictment for violation of a state anti-boycott law, they have given in to neither bitterness nor despair. They have won general sympathy and admiration including that of many southern white people, in their fight for dignity and justice.

We shall share the concern of these our brethren who suffer because of their stand for Christian brotherhood and justice and remember them in our prayers.

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Women's Guild Board Urges Civic Concern

At the recent meeting of the Board of Directors of The Women's Guild with the synodical presidents, local Guilds were encouraged to give active expression to their concern for Christian citizenship in a number of areas. These included

support of state and federal legislation expressive of Christian ideals and phiolosophies, and opposition to legislation which runs counter to these purposes;

support of the United Nations as the best agency available for keeping open the channels between nations and working for peace;

support of the Supreme Court decision by implementing the machinery of desegregation in their own communities.

In addition to encouraging the use of *Christian Community* the Board of Directors voted to give $3,000 out of the unallocated Thank-offering to the Commission on Christian Social Action. A communication was addressed to local Christian Social Action chairmen encouraging them in their efforts to deal with the problems of our time, especially in the area of race relations.

At Work For School Integration

Since November 1 the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church have cooperated in supporting a special short term project to help further the peaceful integration of the public schools in west central Texas. The Reverend Edwin G. Kloppe, pastor of the Evangelical and Reformed Church at Niederwald, under the supervision of the Council, the Commission, and the Social Action Committee of Texas Synod, spends several days each month visiting church leaders and other community groups, informing them of the progress of desegregation in Texas schools, offering resources and techniques to inform public opinion, and thereby assisting them to move toward the goal of equal opportunity for all children without discrimination.

In two other synods the Commission has worked with the synodical committees in conducting institutes on public school desegregation, calling together local church and school people to consider the legal situation and the opportunities within their states and communities. The interest and cooperation of school officials and members of school boards as well as alert pastors, laymen and women was very evident. We hope to continue work in this area.

National Council Supports Victims of Prejudice

On the basis of the comprehensive report of Dr. J. Oscar Lee, reprinted in part in this issue, the General Board of the National Council of Churches at the Omaha meeting adopted a number of significant resolutions. First it assured the churches and fellow Christians, suffering for their efforts to secure compliance with the Supreme Court decisions, of its sympathy and prayers. Taking note of the fact that at least five ministers have been forced to resign their pastorates as a result of their stand against segregation, it urged their denominations to aid them in securing other places of Christian service and directed the Central Department of Church World Service to provide financial assistance to those who thus suffer the consequences of their stand.

In the case of the Reverend J. A. Delaine, of Lake City, South Carolina, who after three attacks on his parsonage, the burning of his church, and a threat of death fled the county, the Board urged Governor Averill Harriman of New York to take into account these facts and the unlikelihood of his receiving a fair trial in responding to South Carolina's request for a writ of extradition.

In a further action, the Board proposed the expansion of the staff of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations to make possible work in areas of special tension. The member denominations have been asked to make additional allocations to the National Council for this program.